JONATHAN HICKMAN · BRYAN HITCH · ANDREW CURRIE · ALEX SINCLAIR
ULTIMATE
INVASION
MARVEL
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CHAPTER ONE: “GOOD ARTISTS COPY”

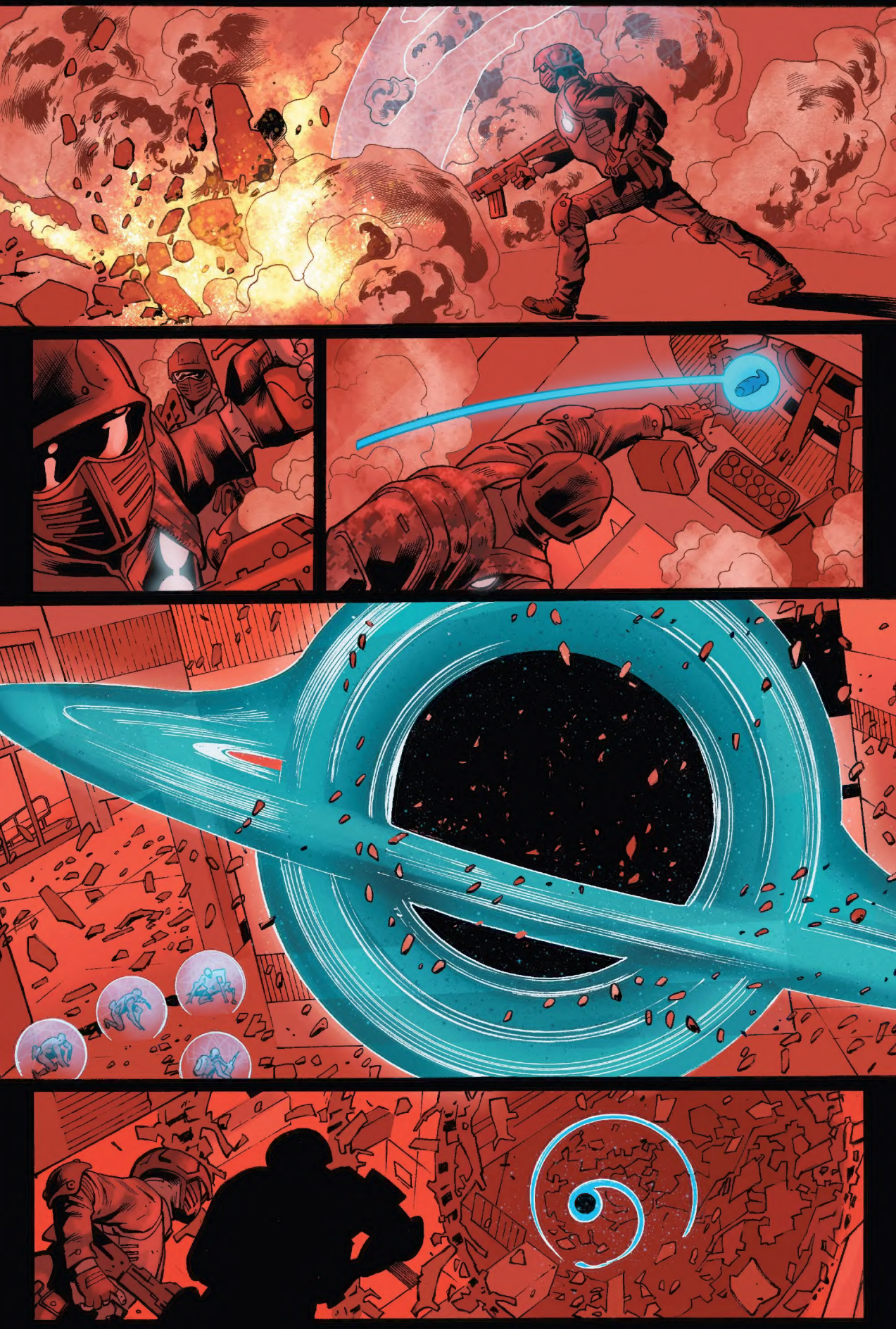
TWO MONTHS AGO.
Water Tower Place
THE BLAAKGUARD BUILDING.
WE'RE HERE.

ONE MINUTE.
POINT OF ENTRY?
SEE THE WINDOW BESIDE YOU? IF YOU LOOK OUT, YOU'LL SEE A BIG BUILDING. GO AHEAD AND DRAW A STRAIGHT LINE 'TWEEN HERE AND THERE.
WE'RE GOING THROUGH THE FRONT DOOR?
UH-HUH. WE'RE GONNA WALK RIGHT IN.
... HOW MANY GUARDS?
A LOT. ALONG WITH AN AUTOMATED FIRING PLATFORM AND A SECURITY SYSTEM THAT CAN'T BE EXTERNALLY HACKED OR DISABLED.
BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU SHOULD BE WORRIED ABOUT.
OKAY. WHAT IS?
SAME AS ALWAYS. GETTIN' OUT WITH WHAT WE CAME FOR.
IT'S TIME.

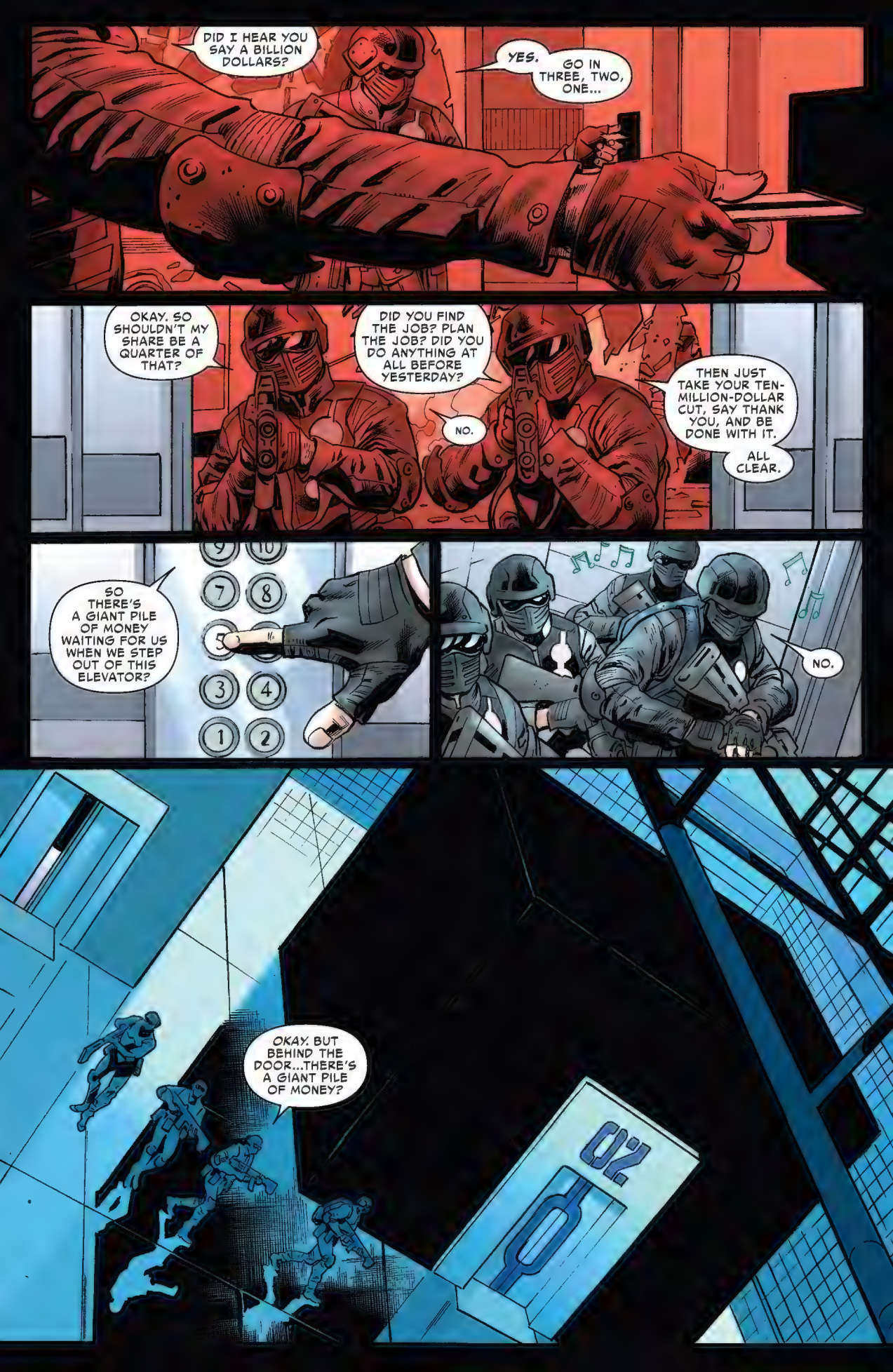
OH #$%&.

HOW AM I NOT DEAD? I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M NOT--
IT'S NOT *LUCK*, IDIOT, IT'S THE *SUIT*. NOW FOCUS ON THE JOB!

... FELT THAT ONE.
WE'VE GOT TO TAKE THAT THING OUT.
TELL YOU WHAT, YOU FIND THE MANAGER AND LODGE A COMPLAINT...
...AND I'LL TRY SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE DIRECT.



OOOF.
EXCUSE ME.
ARE YOU THE MANAGER?
I'M NOT THE MANAGER.
YEAH, BUT YOU DO HAVE A KEY, DON'T YOU? I'LL TAKE THAT NOW.
GOT THE FIRST ONE!
YOU TOO.
WHAT...WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
A BILLION DOLLARS.
THIS... THIS ISN'T A BANK.
WE KNOW.


DID I HEAR YOU SAY A BILLION DOLLARS?
YES. GO IN THREE, TWO, ONE...
OKAY. SO SHOULDN'T MY SHARE BE A QUARTER OF THAT?
DID YOU FIND THE JOB? PLAN THE JOB? DID YOU DO ANYTHING AT ALL BEFORE YESTERDAY?
NO.
THEN JUST TAKE YOUR TEN-MILLION-DOLLAR CUT, SAY THANK YOU, AND BE DONE WITH IT.
ALL CLEAR.
SO THERE'S A GIANT PILE OF MONEY WAITING FOR US WHEN WE STEP OUT OF THIS ELEVATOR?
NO.
OKAY. BUT BEHIND THE DOOR...THERE'S A GIANT PILE OF MONEY?
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NO.
THERE'S A MAN.
WHAT?
A MAN...
...WHO HAPPENED TO PROMISE US A GIANT PILE OF MONEY IF WE GOT HIM OUT OF HERE.
ACCESS CODE?
IT'S... 1-6-1-0.
IT'S GREEN. WE'RE GOOD TO GO.
LET'S GET PAID, PEOPLE.

Right on time.

Did you bring what I asked?
YEAH.
...
Fantastic.

HERE YOU GO, SIR.
WE BROUGHT A CHANGE OF CLOTHES TOO.
First things first.
AGREED.
WHERE'S OUR MONEY?
Where all money is...floating in the ether. Awaiting summons from an imaginary state to a more believable fiction.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE YOU *DON'T HAVE IT.*
I promise you. Whatever "it" is...I most certainly do have it.
AM I REALLY SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE THIS GUY DID ALL THIS FROM INSIDE OF A PRISON...
...BUT HE COULDN'T *GET HIMSELF OUT?*

The trick is not escaping, it's escaping without anyone knowing you've gone.
My captors--*benevolent souls that they are*--deemed it necessary for me to receive the required ***care*** a civilized society demands for those touched by the world in a particular way.
But they also knew that I was, *well*, so very me. So precautions had to be taken.
And thus, instead of one therapist--*I saw a rotating team of them.* It took an eternity--*a full 37 sessions*--for me to mentally break and reprogram them. So as to send them back into the world full of purpose.
I begat them, they begat you, and now you are here before me.
Take off your masks, please.
WHY WOULD WE DO THAT?
JUST DO IT.
Each of you were recruited for the job. I chose you after my flock carefully examined each of your profiles and geneti--
Who are you?
I'M JACKSON.

Dominic Green. Mischa Slope. Randall West.
But you are Jackson and not Keith Conrad.
KEITH GOT ITCHY AND SNUCK OUT OF THE SAFE HOUSE TWO DAYS AGO. HE DIED IN A CAR WRECK ABOUT AN HOUR AFTER THAT. FREAK ACCIDENT. WE HAD TO IMPROVISE.
Ah. The unforeseen complications of impatience and ennui. Trapped here, I'd forgotten what *most people* call discipline.
I, of course, planned for overlap, but the genetic sequencing was for you four for a reason. Each and every ingredient is what makes for good soup.
This will present as a less than one-percent anomaly. Most people would miss it...
...but I wouldn't. And *he* certainly won't.
Which ***vexes*** me. *To no end.* I suppose my choice now is a subtle prayer or a more "on brand" message.
IT WAS LAST MINUTE. THIS WAS THE BEST I COULD DO.
Your best?
There was one of my therapists in here who--*before I did what had to be done*--did have a surprising effect on me...
He encouraged and challenged me in a way I did not believe was possible.
His ideas of acceptable goals and personal betterment were predictably short-sighted, but he actually did make me want to be a better man--a ***better man*** with ***better goals.***

So I'm trying to be better...
I really am.

MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS...

ULTIMATE INVASION

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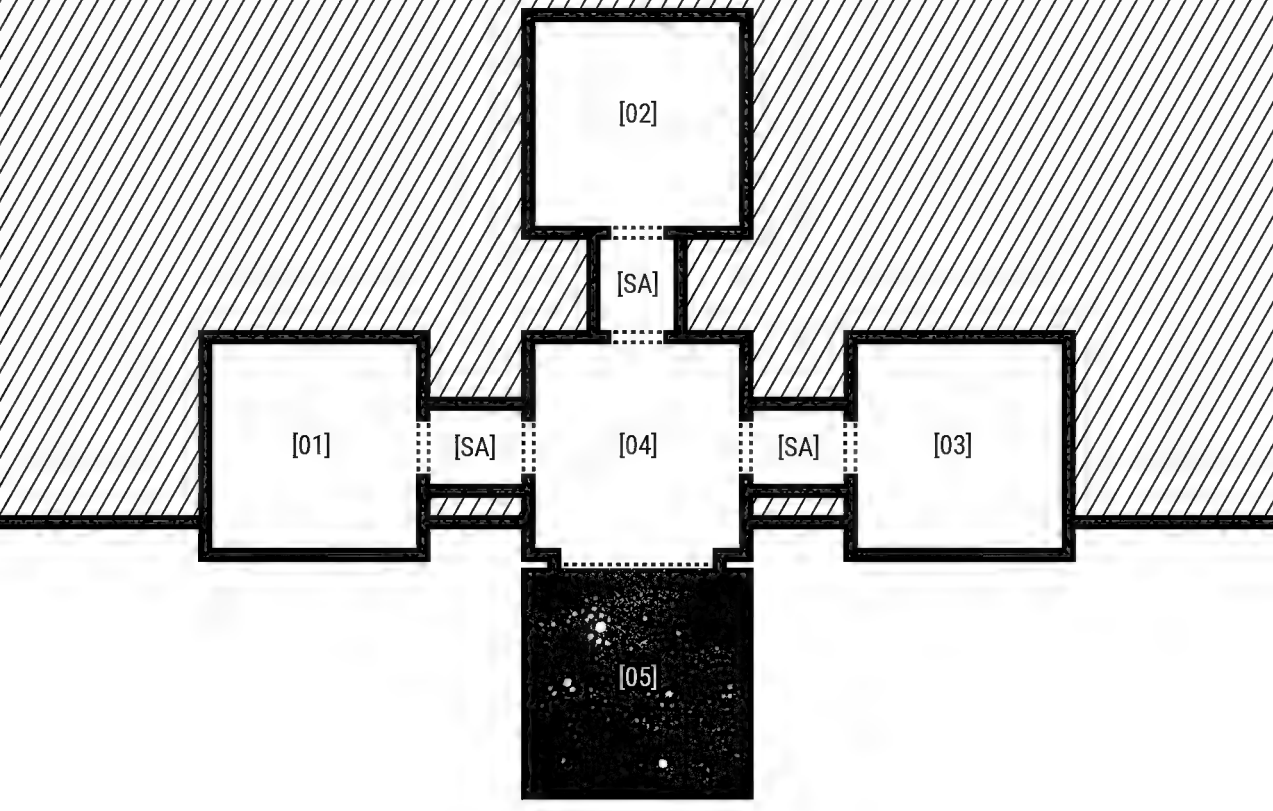
DAMAGE CONTROL

REMOTE PRISON [PR_42] **QUARANTINE**

PRISONER MANIFEST: 1610



[SA].....SECURE ACCESS
[01].....PROJECT PEGASUS.....[*restricted*]
[02].....BLAAKGUARD.....[*destroyed*]
[03].....FURY ACCESS.....[*classified*]
[04].....**PRISONER CELL [1610]**
[05].....NEGATIVE ZONE

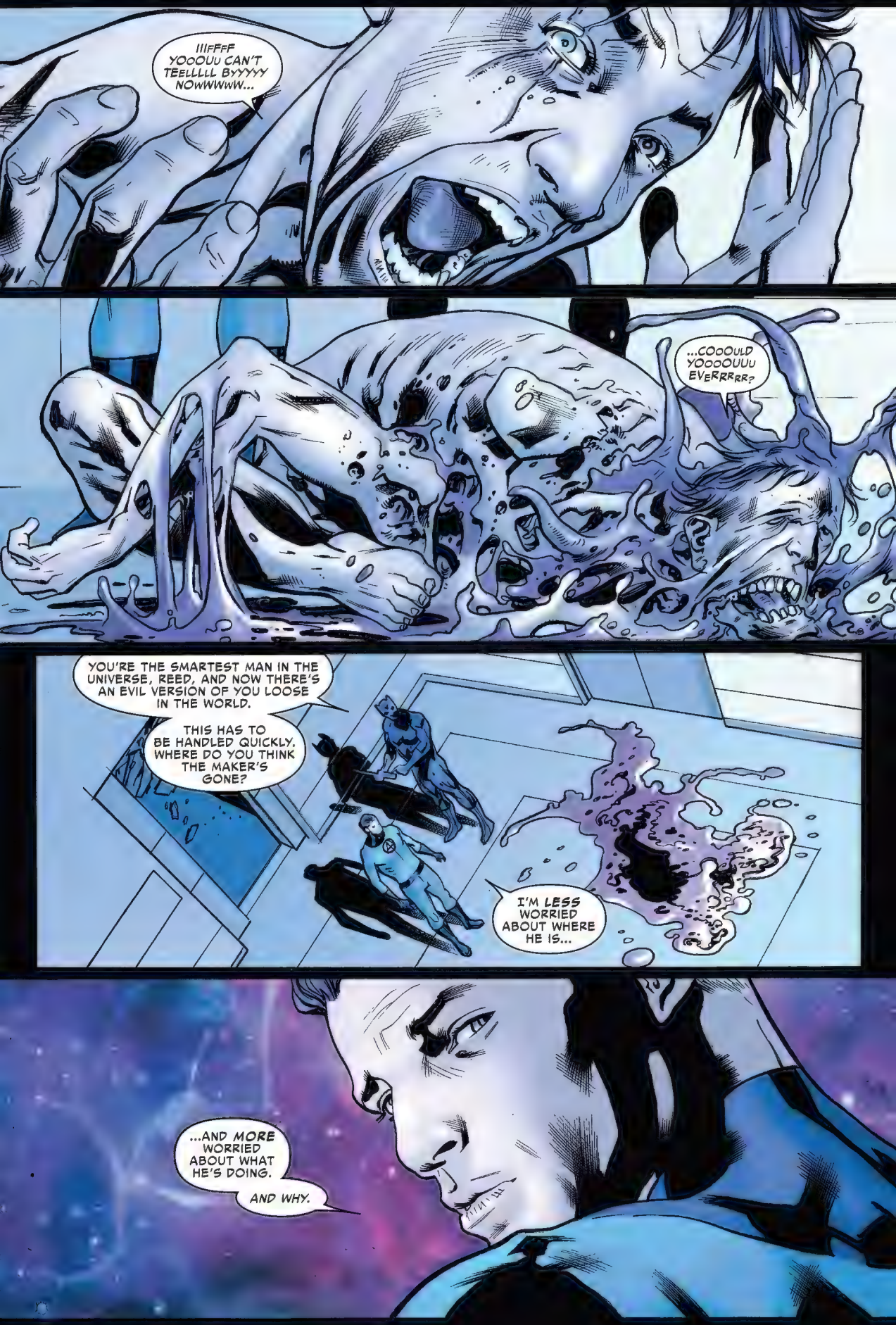
THE MAKER [1610]
MULTIVERSAL REED RICHARDS [DIVERGENT]

DANGER:
Prisoner possesses universal-level intellect combined with megalomania and personal dissociative disorder. Level one restrictions are in place, and extreme caution is advised.

SIX WEEKS AGO.
THE BLAAKGUARD BUILDING.
ALL AROUND US, OUR CITIES ARE CRUMBLING.
I KNOW THAT MANY MIGHT CONSIDER SOMETHING LIKE THIS THE APOTHEOSIS OF MODERNITY'S BLIGHT, BUT I WOULD NOT COUNT MYSELF AMONG THAT NUMBER.
NOR YOU, REED, SO WHY ARE WE LOOKING AT RUBBLE?

"IT'S BEST WHEN BEGINNING THESE THINGS TO REMEMBER HOW MUCH HARDER IT IS TO BUILD A THING THAN DESTROY A THING."
WHEN I SAW THE FOOTAGE-- WATCHED THE EXPLOSION AND THE BUILDING GO DOWN-- I COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT. LIKE MY MIND WAS TRYING TO SOLVE A PUZZLE THAT DIDN'T PRESENT AS ONE. SO I TRIED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK--BUT WASN'T ALLOWED TO.
AH.
AND THEN--LIKE MANNA FROM HEAVEN--MY GOOD FRIEND WITH YEARS OF GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE AND CONNECTIONS CAME FOR A VISIT. AND I JUST HAD TO SHOW HIM THE SIGHTS.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA HOW THICK THE RED TAPE IS ON THIS ONE.
FROM WHICH WE CAN INFER THAT SOMETHING WAS HIDDEN HERE... AND NO ONE WANTS TO TALK ABOUT IT.
ONE QUESTION: WHY ARE WE BOTH PRETENDING THAT YOU COULDN'T FIND A WAY TO TAKE A LOOK IF YOU WANTED TO?
I WAS RECENTLY IN SOMETHING OF A RULE-FOLLOWING PHASE, T'CHALLA. I AM TRYING TO SHOW SOME RESTRAINT.
HOW'S THAT WORKING OUT FOR YOU?
NOT WELL.

THIS IS WHY YOU HAD TROUBLE GETTING ACCESS.
YOU SEE, THE GOVERNMENT ISN'T COVERING FOR ANYONE--THEY'RE DIRECTLY INVOLVED.
MY CONTACTS SAY THIS BUILDING WAS HIDING A SECRET DAMAGE CONTROL NODE.
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT--OR WHO--THEY COULD HAVE HAD HIDDEN HERE?
DAMAGE CONTROL.
OH MY GOD...
LATER.
YOU CAN BREATHE NOW.
HE'S STILL HERE.
HMMM. PERHAPS...
IS THAT REALLY YOU, REED? ARE YOU REALLY ME?


IIIFFFF YOOOUU CAN'T TEELLLLL BYYYYY NOWWWWW...
...COOOULD YOOOOUUU EVERRRRR?
YOU'RE THE SMARTEST MAN IN THE UNIVERSE, REED, AND NOW THERE'S AN EVIL VERSION OF YOU LOOSE IN THE WORLD.
THIS HAS TO BE HANDLED QUICKLY. WHERE DO YOU THINK THE MAKER'S GONE?
I'M LESS WORRIED ABOUT WHERE HE IS...
...AND MORE WORRIED ABOUT WHAT HE'S DOING.
AND WHY.

ONE WEEK LATER.
THE BAXTER BUILDING.
...
DAD?
DAD?

There you are.
I knew you had it in you.
"SO WHAT DID HE TAKE?"

THE NEXT DAY. THE NECROPOLIS.
I'M NOT SURE. HE CLOSED THE LOOP--COVERED HIS TRACKS WELL.
WHAT WE DO KNOW IS WHERE HE WENT AFTER THAT...
...DON'T WE?

"HE CAME HERE TO WAKANDA AND SUCCESSFULLY STOLE ENOUGH VIBRANIUM TO FORGE INTO WHO KNOWS WHAT.
"THEN HE APPEARED IN NEW ARCTILAN AND MADE OFF WITH FOUR INHUMAN TERRIGEN SPHERES. EACH ONE WITH ENOUGH ENERGY TO POWER A LARGE CITY. FOR OVER A THOUSAND YEARS.
"AFTER THAT, HE STOLE A BRIDGE OF MINE THAT *WAS NOT* SUPPOSED TO BE IN STORAGE AT A SECRET STARK WAREHOUSE IN LONG ISLAND.
"AND THEN HE SOMEHOW MADE OFF WITH A MUTANT GATEWAY--WHICH WERE SUPPOSED TO BE UNMOVABLE AND USELESS TO ANYONE NOT POSSESSING A MUTANT GENE.
"GOD KNOWS WHAT HE'S THINKING THERE.

"HE THEN ABSCONDED WITH AN IMMUNITY LANCE HE FOUND IN THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM.
"AND FINALLY, IN THE RUINS OF ATLANTIS, HE SECURED ONE OF THEIR FEW FUNCTIONING DILUTION SHIELDS. APPARENTLY, AT NO SMALL COST.
"THE 'WHY' OF WHY WE ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY IS THE LINGERING QUESTION: *WHAT IS THE MAKER MAKING?"*
GIVEN ENOUGH TIME, I'M SURE WE COULD MAKE SOME ASSUMPTIONS OF WHAT HE'S BUILDING BASED ON THE RESOURCES GATHERED...
BUT THE TWO GATEWAYS, BOTH THE SPEAR AND THE SHIELD...*WHY THE REDUNDANCIES?*
IT'S A MESSAGE. TO THE INEVITABLE GATHERING OF THE GROUP OF US. SOME KIND OF UNMISTAKABLE GRAND GESTURE...TALKING SLOWLY FOR THE CHILDREN...
HE WANTS US TO KNOW.
YES. AND THE COMPONENTS HE STOLE ARE UNIQUE AND IDENTIFIABLE. HE HAS TO KNOW THAT WE'LL BE LOOKING FOR THOSE ENERGY SIGNATURES...AND HE HAS TO KNOW THAT WE'LL KNOW WHEN HE TURNS IT ON.
SO WHAT'S HE WAITING FOR?

LATER THAT SAME DAY. BROOKLYN.
How can you possibly sleep with the world moving as it is--the gears of this fraudulent, infernal machine grinding our bones to dust?
WHAT THE--?!
WHO ARE YOU?

Have we not met? I cannot tell with so many of you...
The masks and monikers and--more than that--the repetitive nature of so many of you...heroes.
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
You are Miles Morales, and I...
...am your brother.
...
WHAT?
I read about it in his records. It was some trick of universal rebirth and reality-shaping, as I understand it... But according to the secret history...
...it's something every creature on this planet--in this universe--shares.
But you and I have something that sets us apart from them. Apart from their shared history.
We are the only two survivors of a dead universe, Miles. The only living children of gods erased from history.
Did you know that?

DID YOU NOT?
No, not in the way I do now. But if you know, then you must feel the same itch that I do. The one you cannot reach, the one you cannot scratch...
The pull of nothingness and oblivion that we share with the world we are from--*the feeling of lives erased and forgotten.*
...
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
I am going... *home.*
Would you like to come with me?
OH MAN...
YOU'RE TOTALLY SERIOUS, AREN'T YOU?
Yes. It felt wrong to go and not ask you to come along.
I would want to be asked, if the roles were reversed.

NAH.
I'M GOOD.
If you change your mind.
HUH.
IT'S BLANK.
"YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY WITH THIS!"

WE'RE GOING TO STOP YOU!

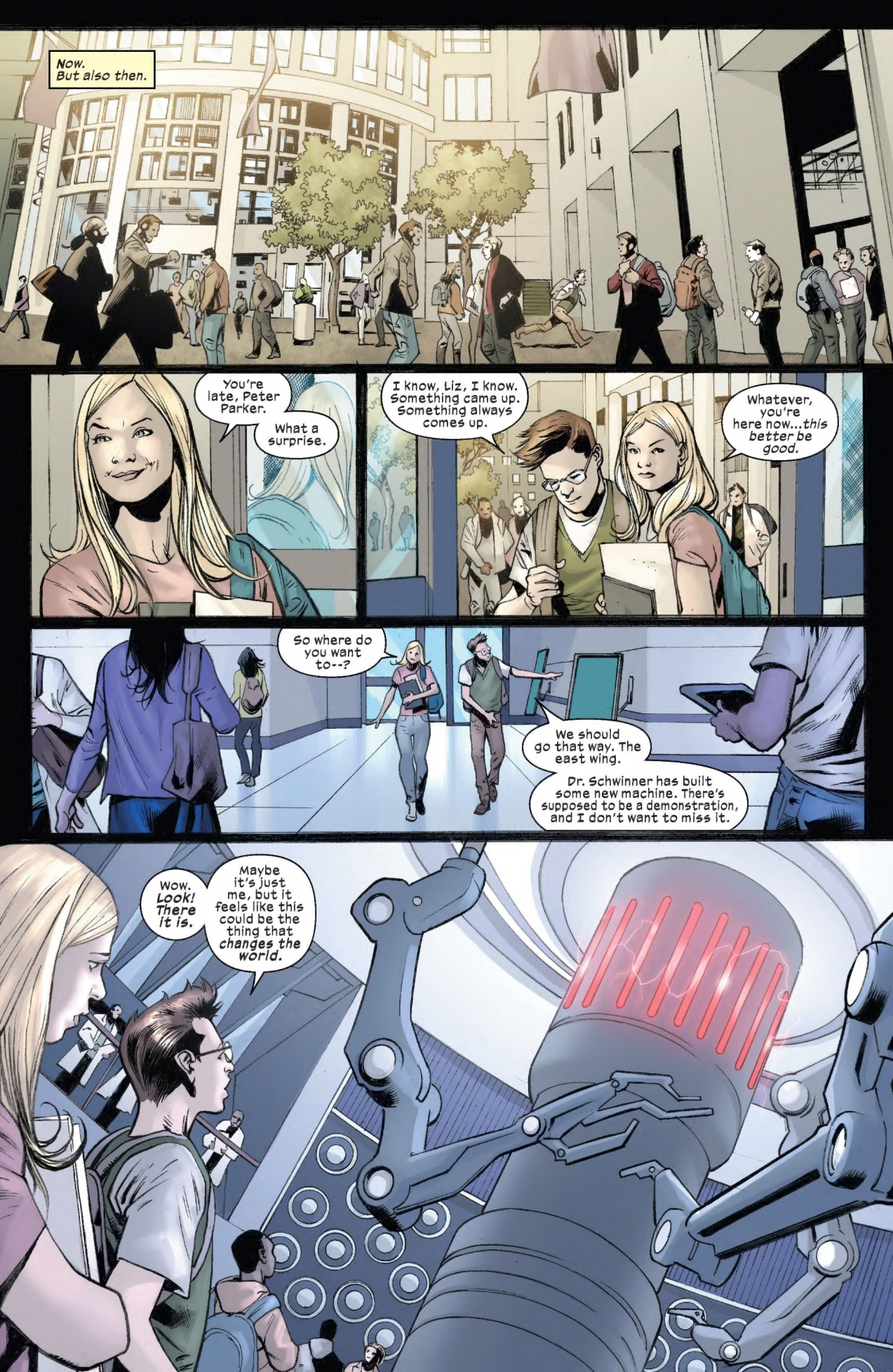
Now, Reed. Why would you lie to yourself like that?
How can you stop me when you know neither where I'm going nor what I'm going to do?
And I promise you, by the time you do figure it out, I will have already left you long behind.
My path, you see, is set. My course fixed.
WE'LL FOLLOW YOU.
WE'LL FIND YOU.
The Bridge controller is set to purge and randomize as soon as I travel through.
You might be able to find where I went if I didn't run the sequencing through the gateway. But I did...and as we both know, that kind of biological encoding is the best encryption under this, or any other, sun.
IT CAN BE DONE. ANYTHING CAN BE DONE.
Yes, but the time it would take. It's measured in years, decades even...
Do you really want to find me that badly?

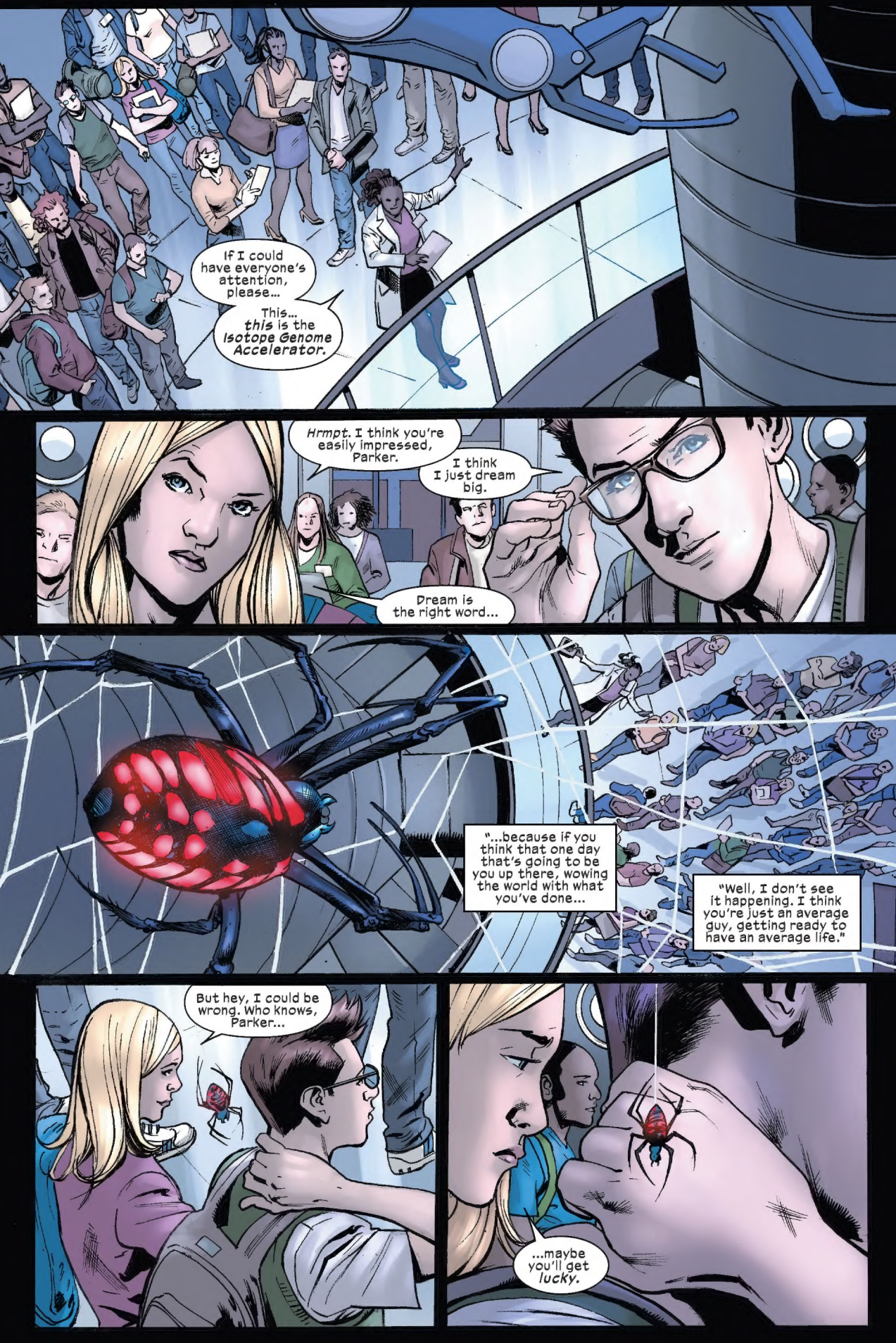
THAT DEPENDS. WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO?
I'm going someplace I can call *my* own.
Someplace I can create as was intended at my creation.
OH GOD...I KNOW WHAT HE'S GOING TO DO. WE HAVE TO STOP HIM WHILE WE STILL CAN.
DO IT! DO IT NOW!

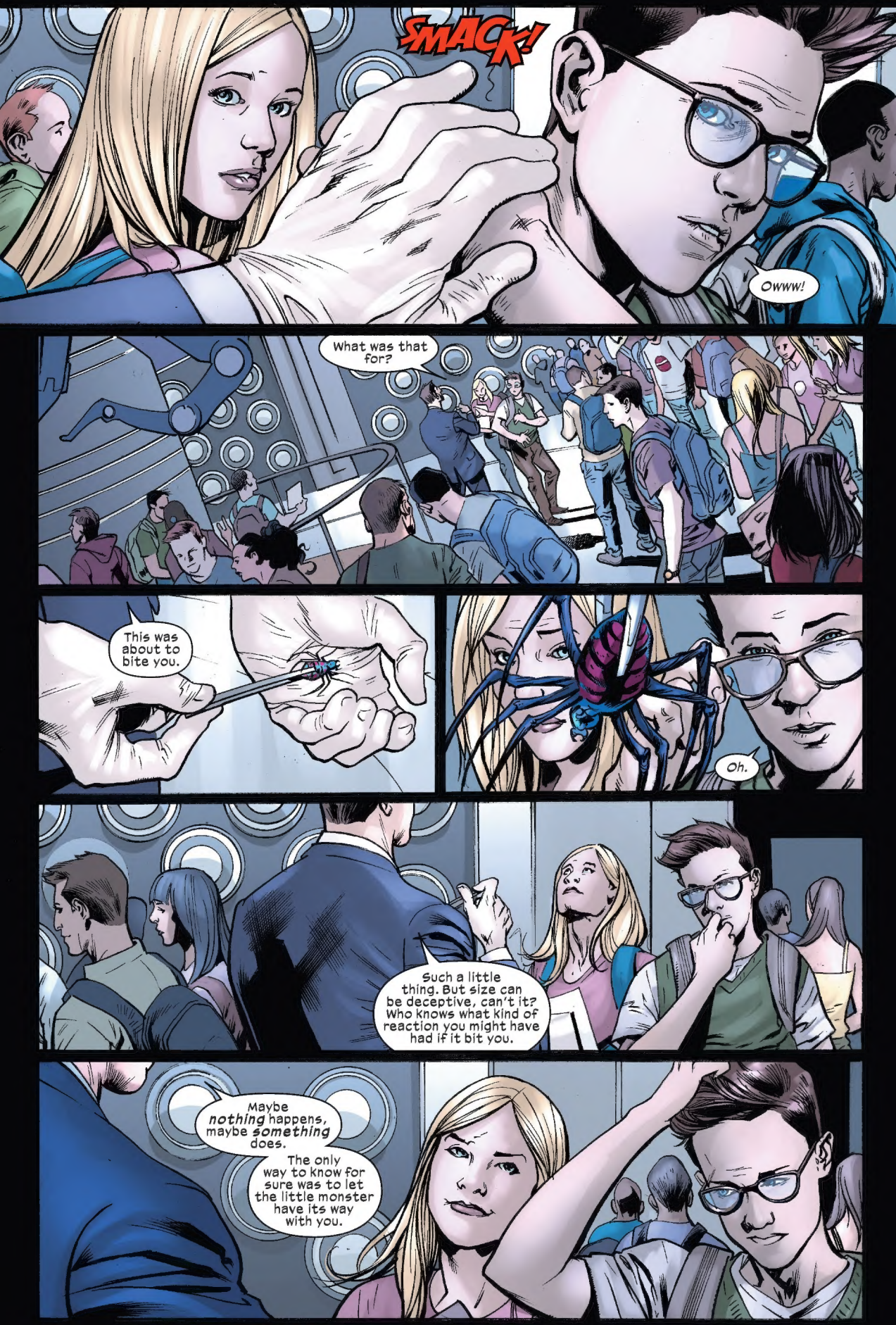
Finished?

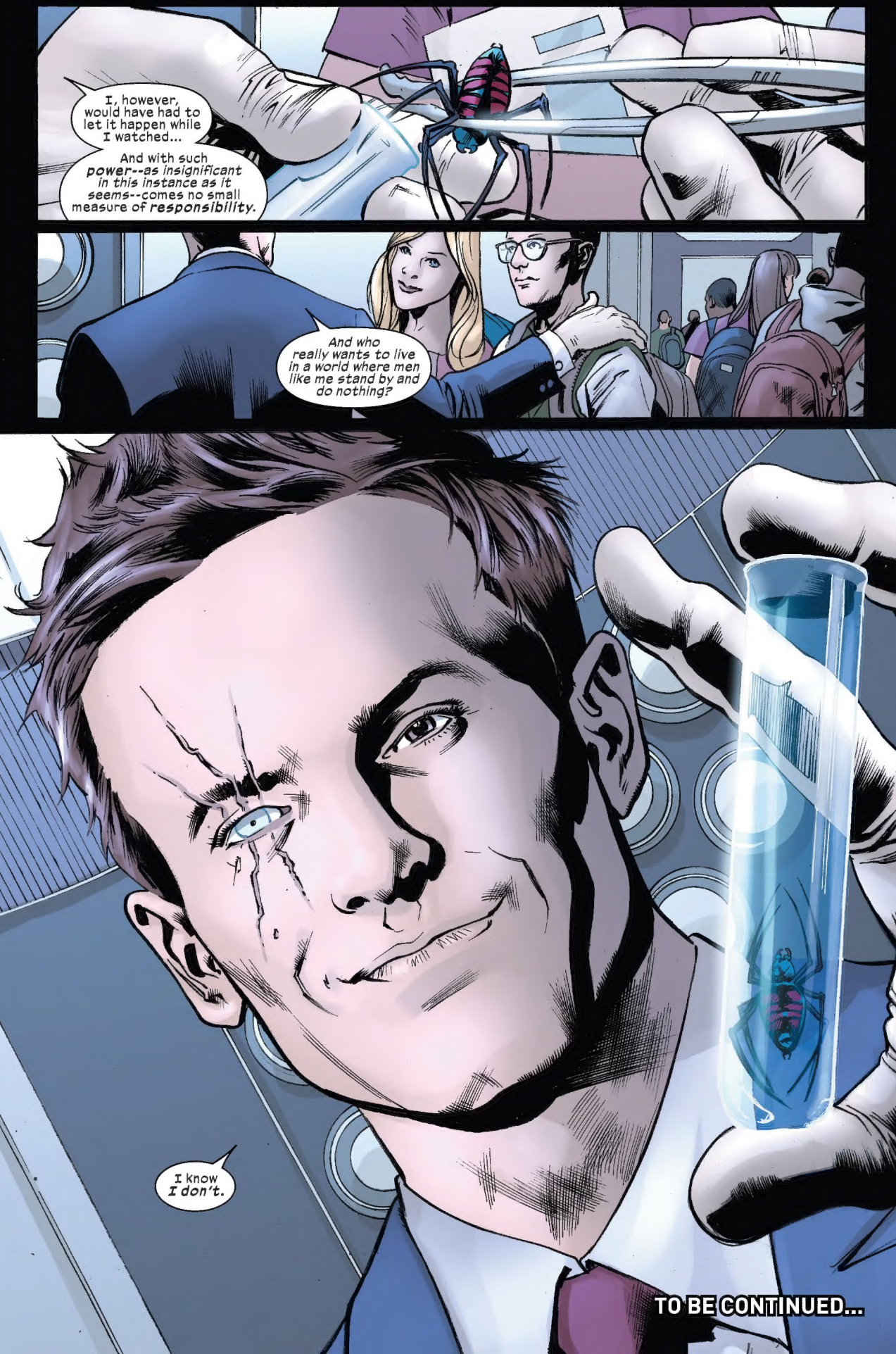
YOU KNOW BETTER THAN THAT.
Do I? I've often wondered, if our roles had been reversed, would I be any different? Would you?
It's why I waited--*why I left this trail for you to follow.*
It was for this moment. So I could ask you one simple question:
If you could do it all again--*if you could truly change things*--if you had the chance...
...would you ***erase me*** from ***existence?***
...
...YES.
I'll keep that in mind.

EPILOGUE:
“GREAT ARTISTS STEAL”


Now.
But also then.
You're late, Peter Parker.
What a surprise.
I know, Liz, I know. Something came up. Something always comes up.
Whatever, you're here now...*this better be good.*
So where do you want to--?
We should go that way. The east wing.
Dr. Schwinner has built some new machine. There's supposed to be a demonstration, and I don't want to miss it.
Wow. *Look! There it is.*
Maybe it's just me, but it feels like this could be the thing that *changes the world.*


If I could have everyone's attention, please...
This... *this* is the *Isotope Genome Accelerator.*
Hrmpt. I think you're easily impressed, Parker.
I think I just dream big.
Dream is the right word...
"...because if you think that one day that's going to be you up there, wowing the world with what you've done...
"Well, I don't see it happening. I think you're just an average guy, getting ready to have an average life."
But hey, I could be wrong. Who knows, Parker...
...maybe you'll get *lucky.*


SMACK!
Owww!
What was that for?
This was about to bite you.
Oh.
Such a little thing. But size can be deceptive, can't it? Who knows what kind of reaction you might have had if it bit you.
Maybe *nothing* happens, maybe *something* does.
The only way to know for sure was to let the little monster have its way with you.


I, however, would have had to let it happen while I watched...
And with such *power*--as *insignificant in this instance as it seems*--comes no small measure of *responsibility*.
And who really wants to live in a world where men like me stand by and do nothing?
I know I don't.
TO BE CONTINUED...